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SUBJECT: TAIWAN'S NEW GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OFFICE DIRECTOR

Classified By: ROBERT W. FORDEN, AIT KAOHSIUNG PRINCIPAL OFFICER.
REASON: 1.4(B/D).

1. (C) Summary: The appointment of Yao Wen-chi (aka Pasuya Yao) to be Taiwan's new Government Information Office (GIO) Director represents another move by Premier Frank Hsieh to position his long-time aides in key EY positions. Yao is a long-time AIT/K contact and previously served as Kaohsiung City Deputy Secretary General and Director of the Kaohsiung City Information Department under then-Mayor Frank Hsieh. Serving effectively as Taiwan Government Spokesman, Yao is expected to be a close advisor to Premier Hsieh with whom Yao has been closely associated since Hsieh's days as a legislator. End Summary.

2. (C) The appointment of Yao Wen-chi as GIO Director General marks the rise of another protege of Premier Hsieh to a key Executive Yuan (EY) position, as Hsieh moves to build his team in the EY. Yao's relationship with Hsieh goes back over a decade when Yao served first as a campaign assistant and then as Hsieh's legislative aide from 1994-8. Prior to that Yao had worked five years for Liberty Times as a reporter and copy editor. During his time as Hsieh's legislative aide, Yao also served on Hsieh's campaign staff in Hsieh's 1996 failed run for Vice President with DPP Presidential candidate Peng Ming-min. In 1998, Yao followed Frank Hsieh to Kaohsiung where he helped Hsieh win as Kaohsiung Mayor.

3. (C) Yao served as Director of the Kaohsiung City Information Department under Hsieh from 1998-2000 and then moved up to serve as Kaohsiung Deputy Secretary General soon thereafter. After Hsieh began to take heat over rumors that Yao had been involved in illegal solicitation of funds for pet projects of Hsieh and/or had retained some of the funds for his personal use, Yao resigned from the City Government to pursue study abroad. Frank Hsieh later denounced the accusations against Yao asserting that a thorough investigation had proven them groundless. Rather than pursuing his studies, however, Yao moved to Taipei and took a position as General Manager of the Taiwan Television Culture Company, a subsidiary of one Taiwan's largest television networks, TTV.

4. (C) Born December 4, 1965, in Hsinchu, Yao Wen-chi has an M.A. in Political Science from National Cheng Chi University and a B.A. in Mass Communications from Fu Jen Catholic University. During Yao's recent work with Taiwan aborigines, he adopted an aboriginal name, &Pasuya8, which he now uses as his &English8 name as well. He is considered by many to be attractive and is very tall by Taiwan standards) around six feet tall. He has a gentle and friendly personality that comes across well. AIT/K nominated successfully Yao for AIT's International Visitor program in 2000, but Yao was forced to cancel his program due to schedule problems.

5. (C) Comment: Yao's appointment is another in a series of moves Premier Hsieh has made and is planning to make to position his longtime close advisors into key positions within the EY staff. Yao, a relatively youthful 40 years old, is also typical of many of Hsieh's proteges; Hsieh makes a point of cultivating young, well-educated and loyal advisors which he places in key positions to ensure effective control of the bureaucracy and ensure good information about issues emerging in each portfolio. It was a style that served him well in Kaohsiung and which he appears to be repeating. Should Hsieh succeed in what most expect will be a run for Taiwan president in four years, many of the same young advisors can be expected to rise to even more important positions.

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